DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 415 CS 216 300

AUTHOR	Shaw, Linda Newcome
TITLE	Language Arts Portfolios in the Elementary Classroom.
PUB DATE	1998-05-00
NOTE	75p.; M.A. Thesis, Salem-Teikyo University. Some appended materials may not be legible.
PUB TYPE	Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Records; Elementary Education; *Evaluation Methods; Evaluation Problems; Evaluation Research; Grades (Scholastic); *Language Arts; *Portfolio Assessment; *Report Cards; *Student Evaluation; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Surveys
IDENTIFIERS	Randolph County School District WV

ABSTRACT

Should portfolios replace the traditional report card or be used in conjunction with other evaluative methods? A study assessed the value of portfolios as an evaluation tool and the popularity of their use. Research supports the use of portfolios as a viable means of assessment, yet studies are inconclusive and do not support portfolios as a better alternative to other forms of assessment. This study was conducted in Randolph County, West Virginia, to determine the assessment methods that are utilized by the elementary teachers. The advantages and disadvantages of using portfolios in the evaluative process were revealed. Results from 69 elementary teacher surveys were utilized. The research results indicated that the majority of teachers prefer the traditional report card with letter grades rather than a portfolio approach to student evaluations. Findings suggest that a combination approach is being used by many Randolph County elementary teachers and conclude that portfolios should not replace the report card. To be most effective, portfolio evaluation should be combined with other assessment methods. (Contains a 53-item bibliography; a sample teacher survey, a letter to the district superintendent, and evaluation forms.) (Author/CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

CS

ED 418 415

LANGUAGE ARTS PORTFOLIOS IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Master of Arts Degree Program

Salem-Teikyo University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L. Shaw

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

by

Linda Newcome Shaw

May 1998

CS 216 300

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Salem-Teikyo University
Salem, West Virginia

This thesis submitted by Linda Shaw has been approved meeting the research requirements for the Master of Arts Degree.

4/27/98 — Date
Gary S. McAllister — Thesis Committee Chair
Professor of Education, Salem-Teikyo University

4/27/98 — Date
Assistant Professor of Education and Graduate Program Director, Salem-Teikyo University

4/27/98 — Date
John F. Curran
Professor of Education, Salem-Teikyo University

Abstract

Should portfolios replace the traditional report card or be used in conjunction with other evaluative methods? The value of portfolios as an evaluation tool and the popularity of their use constituted the importance of this study. Research supported the use of portfolios as a viable means of assessment. Yet, studies are inconclusive and do not support portfolios as a better alternative to other forms of assessment. A study was conducted in Randolph County, West Virginia to determine the assessment methods that are utilized by the elementary teachers. The advantages and disadvantages of using portfolios in the evaluative process were revealed. Results from sixty-nine elementary teacher surveys were utilized. The research results indicated that the majority of teachers prefer the traditional report card with letter grades rather than a portfolio approach to student evaluations. The teachers indicated that a combination approach is being used by many Randolph County elementary teachers. Thus, the conclusion of this study of portfolio assessment indicated that portfolios should not replace the report card. Portfolio evaluation should be combined with other assessment methods to be most effective.

Table of Contents

Page

List of Figures iii

Chapter

1. Introduction 1
2. Review of Related Literature 7
   - History and Purposes of Assessment 7
   - Problems With Assessment 9
   - Need For a New Assessment 11
   - Portfolios Explained 13
   - The Process in Developing Student Portfolios 16
   - Advantages of Student Portfolios 18
   - Problems Associated With Portfolios 22
   - Mandated or Standardized Portfolios 26
   - Future of Portfolios in Education 29
   - Summary 31
3. Methods and Procedures 33
4. Analysis of the Data 37
5. Summary and Conclusions 54

Bibliography 58

Appendixes

A. Permission to Survey 64
B. Teacher Questionnaire 65
C. Lower Grade Report Card 66
D. Upper Grade Report Card 67

Figures

Figure		Page
4.1	Methods of Evaluating Students	39
4.2	Use of Portfolios in Student Evaluations	39
4.3	Use of Portfolios During Parent-Teacher Conferences	41
4.4	Contents of Student Portfolios	41
4.5	Do Portfolios Affect Teaching Methods?	43
4.6	Do Portfolios Affect Student Learning?	43
4.7	Benefits of Portfolio Evaluation	45
4.8	Disadvantages of Portfolio Evaluation	47
4.9	Type of Assessment Preference	47

CHAPTER 1

The Problem

Introduction

Portfolio assessment is one of the most dynamic assessments discussed today. It takes assessment to the evaluation level. It is centered around a new philosophy of assessment in which a wide array of literacy activities are collected over a long period of time. According to Pikulski, these literacy tasks take place in a natural setting where students and texts come together (26:80).

Educators, interested in children's academic progress, can consult with the children's teachers and interview the children's parents. They can even observe the children themselves. They can read the teachers' anecdotal reports and collect the students' work over a period of time. This type of information becomes the basis for the portfolio (1:256).

Routman reported that at mandated times throughout the school year, classroom teachers must evaluate each of their students. It is one of the tasks in which they feel most inadequate. Many teachers lack training or guidance in this area. They also lack self-confidence and trust in making their own decisions (9:301).

Calfee and Perfumo, at the National Center for the Study of

Writing, conducted a survey of 150 teachers nationwide. The respondents shared similar concerns about evaluation. They expressed a dislike for assigning grades to their students' work. The teachers were willing to judge individual pieces of work but did not like attaching a grade to the work. Many of the surveyed teachers viewed the comment section on the report card as the most valuable (46:5).

Evaluation becomes a daunting task for some teachers because they do not see the distinction between assessment and evaluation. According to Routman, this assessment, which is confusing to many teachers, is only the beginning of the evaluation process. Assessment is simply the collection of data or evidence, such as standardized tests scores, letter grades and other meaningful information. These raw data must be taken to the next level in the evaluation process, at which time it is examined, analyzed and used as a basis for judging and making educational decisions for the student. Routman added that if teachers are not using the assessment step to guide their instruction, then evaluation is not taking place. Assessment must be a part of good instruction. It must be authentic (9:302). Valencia stated that portfolios embrace a philosophy that requires educators to view assessment as a vital part of instruction and as a guide for learning. It is a philosophy

that respects the process and the product of learning (31:340).

Statement of the Problem

Portfolio assessment should replace the traditional report card. Portfolios are more effective if they are used in combination with other types of assessment.

Research Questions

1. Are student portfolios being used in the process of evaluating students' academic performance?

2. What do teachers view as the major advantage and disadvantage of student portfolios?

3. Does the use of student portfolios affect teaching methods and student learning?

4. Which do teachers prefer--portfolio assessment, traditional letter grades, a checklist of outcomes or a combination of these?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to define student portfolios and show how they have developed into a form of academic assessment. The research will further explain the strengths and weaknesses of their use for both teachers and parents. This study will attempt to determine how widespread the use of portfolio assessment is at the elementary level in Randolph County Schools in

West Virginia.

Herman and Winters of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing stated that portfolios are methods by which teachers can provide fair and broad profiles of what students know and can accomplish. Portfolios allow teachers to focus and report on students' outcomes. Portfolios affect policy and practice in all aspects of the educational community (21:48).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research will be to show the value in a specific form of student assessment--the use of student portfolios. This research will attempt to determine that portfolio assessment is an effective way to indicate the academic growth of a student.

Assumptions

1. The time frame is adequate.
2. The instrument utilized for the survey is valid.
3. The sample is adequate in size.
4. The sample is typical of teachers in Randolph County.
5. The teachers will respond honestly to the questions.

Limitations

1. The survey is limited to elementary teachers in Randolph County.
2. There is inconsistency in how teachers report a

child's academic performance to parents in Randolph County. Although report cards are mandated, teachers in the primary grades use a checklist of skills and the upper elementary teachers use letter grades.

3. Some teachers may not be familiar with academic portfolios.

Definition of Terms

Academic portfolio: A teacher's record-keeping system built around performance evidence collected in the classroom and intended to be used by teachers for instructional planning, diagnosis and conferring with parents (39:447).

Assessment: A method of evaluation of academic performance.

Authentic assessment: An analytical look at whether or not students are demonstrating learning through the performance of worthwhile tasks (5:6).

Inter-rater reliability: A measurement that involves the consistency in which a test is scored or rated by two examiners.

Literacy portfolio: A record or collection that focuses on a student's reading and writing progress.

Norm referenced test: A test that measures achievement based on normal curve (7:1).

Performance-based assessment: A type of assessment that

requires students to perform a task that requires a skill.

Reliability: The consistency of an assessment.

Scoring rubric: A set of descriptions used for classroom assessment purposes (7:6).

Standardized testing: An assessment that involves multiple choice answers and performance based on a standard score.

CHAPTER 2

Review Of Related Literature

Introduction

Assessment of students has been heralded by educational leaders as a method of bringing about positive changes in the classroom. According to Stewart, at the University of Wyoming, portfolios are powerful tools in the implementation of an assessment concept that is broad and personal in scope. When educators began seeking information on assessment and portfolios, a wide array of articles and books became available. Throughout the literature on portfolios, a common theme emphasized that portfolios are valuable for students, enabling them to become lifelong readers and writers. At the same time, the available information stressed that educators needed to give portfolios time to mature and develop. They should not view them as a panacea of student assessment (29: 522).

History and Purposes of Assessment

Traditionally, assessment has meant testing. Teachers use mandated standardized tests and informal tests that they devise themselves. The purpose of this testing has been to report results that rank students against national and state standards (2:29).

Throughout the United States during the 1940s, thousands of teachers tested their students every Friday in reading, writing, spelling and math. These tests were based on material covered during the week. The correct answer and neatness were two main criteria.

> A tightly linked, locally controlled scenario: the teacher decided what to teach and how to test it; students were expected to prepare and perform; parents handled praises and penalties (44:1).

According to Calfee of the National Center for the Study of Writing, standardized tests became popular as the public demanded more accountability. These instruments of testing differed from the teacher-based methods. The standardized forms of assessment were not locally developed. Multiple choice replaced writing. Tests were administered annually rather than weekly, and results were available in months rather than days (44:1).

According to Mundell and DeLario, these norm-referenced or standardized tests served several purposes. They were used to report to parents a child's mastery of basic skills and to develop and plan instructional programs. They also helped to justify the grouping of students (7:1).

Prior to the 1980s, the standardized tests were used at the local level to track students, to select students for special

programs and to plan instruction. However during the 1980s, the purposes of the tests shifted. The tests became a method to compare students' performance. The testing was viewed as a way to increase student achievement. As a result, instruction narrowed and became controlled by the testing (17:620).

Problems With Assessment

Cunningham and Allington noted that although standardized testing has expanded during the last two decades, it has accomplished little to improve education. Very seldom are test scores analyzed and the results used to improve educational programs. Test scores are used primarily to group students. In some cases, tests can be defended if they are used to assess how well a school is doing in its attempt to educate its students. Tests that do not help teachers to be more effective are a waste of time and resources (1:256). Gardner, a professor at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University, stated his concern on the use of standardized testing.

> Standardized tests that require only short answers present a situation that does not exist outside of school; life does not present itself in multiple-choice format (40:564).

Mundell and DeLario went on to say that norm referenced tests

focus on factual information and how well a student can recall this information. The tests fail to measure the students' understanding and application of the material. The purposes, methods and strategies of students' reading and writing are not addressed by the tests (7:1).

According to Gomez, Graue and Bloch, three factions have been at work in the assessment movement. Some critics have called for more classroom-based assessment, which should match the actual tasks performed within the classroom. Advocates of teacher empowerment have emphasized the need for teacher involvement in decision-making. These two groups encourage site-based management and more teacher control over curriculum, instruction and assessment. A third faction called for assessment reform because they believe standardized tests are being used to repress minorities, both socially and economically (17:620-21).

Calfee expressed support for these above reported factions, because they called for more teacher and classroom-based assessment. He stated that changes should involve a more demanding curriculum and effective instruction. The focus of any change in assessment should be on the teacher and the classroom (44:2).

Need For a New Assessment

At the same time that critics of standardized testing were seeking assessment reform, teachers observed a need to bring curriculum and assessment together. They began reading to students more often, providing more independent reading and writing activities, integrating literature into all subject areas, examining literacy research and perceiving reading and writing as interactive processes rather than the acquisition of skills. Valencia saw a need for alternative assessment as teachers tried to balance instruction and assessment, which often are opposing goals. An assessment system was needed that correlated instruction and assessment and held teachers and students accountable for instructional outcomes. She stated that teachers wanted to communicate to those inside and outside the classroom, the real literacy achievements of their students (30:60).

A portfolio researcher, Tierney, reported in his book, Portfolio Assessment in the Reading-Writing Classroom proposed goals for a classroom-based assessment program. He stated that assessment should provide valid information about how a student achieves and performs over a period of time. Quality assessment should direct curriculum and instruction. It should include all forms of reading and writing experiences, not just those related to a set of skills or

outcomes. Additionally, good assessment should involve the students by enabling them to develop the skills necessary to evaluate their own work. Tierney stated that an effective assessment plan allowed teachers to grow in their understanding of how children develop as readers and writers. Using this knowledge teachers can evaluate their own effectiveness. He added that when used to report students' performance, the assessment should reflect student growth rather than a set of scores or grades (10:34-5).

According to Valencia, sound assessment also should reflect authentic reading tasks. Students read a variety of texts and for various purposes. The assessment should include this same variety. Assessment should measure the process of learning over a period of time rather than the learning outcome. Assessment should account for the collaboration of the student and teacher, which enables them to evaluate how well they are achieving their goals (31:85).

Subsequently, Calfee noted that new developments in curriculum and instruction have brought to surface new alternative assessments. These new assessments have taken several avenues--authentic assessment, performance tests and portfolios. All of these assessments share certain characteristics. The students must show that they actually can do something rather than just pick the right answer. Test items are being replaced with projects that

show depth and teachers' judgment is replacing mechanized scoring. The goal of these new alternative assessments is to provide the students with an opportunity to show their potential when given the time and resources. As Calfee believes, the portfolio accomplishes this goal (44:2).

Portfolios Explained

Although portfolios have had a more recent introduction into the field of education, they always have been apparent in two other areas. An investor's portfolio is a collection of documents that reflects assets and their potential increase in value. The investor's portfolio correlates to specific financial goals and what is important. Artists use their portfolios to hold their private work that will be used to gain admission to art school, for employment or for entry in gallery shows. Both types of portfolios reflect the keepers' stand in relationship to the art work or assets that they choose to include (4:118-19).

Language arts portfolios include the same concepts as those in the art and investment areas. Readers and writers also develop skills in the course of their practice. The portfolio contents provide information that reflects these developing skills. They encourage students' reflections as related to their reading and writing. The

portfolios are grounded in what students are doing. This new portfolio assessment enables teachers and students to evaluate and understand their reading and writing as well as themselves (10:42). As Wolf and Gearhart of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing noted,

> Portfolio assessment in particular represents the growing commitment to bridge the worlds of public accountability and private classroom, of policy-maker and child (52:3).

What then are portfolios as used in the context of education and, in particular, language arts? Briefly stated by De Fina, "Portfolios are the means by which assessments are made." According to De Fina, portfolios are an organized collection of students' work. They are not works that have been randomly collected, but work that has been selected by the students through a decision-making process. The students decide what pieces to include, but their decisions are based on predetermined criteria (2: 13-14).

De Fina added that these portfolios should not be used to reveal curriculum, but should reflect what a student has learned. They should show where students are going and also their starting place and their accomplishments. Most importantly, the portfolios should depict students' growth over a period of time (2:15-16).

Routman contended that instead of portfolio assessment, it should be "portfolio approach to evaluation". She proposed the use of a wide variety of assessments that would direct instruction and provide the learner with more control over the evaluation process. The portfolio evaluation should include various observations, measurements and records that would provide a complete profile of a student. Self-evaluation should be a critical part, focusing on the process and change that is occurring. She further maintained that a portfolio approach is not a collection of work. It involves a higher level of thinking about evaluation. This higher thinking is necessary if students are to become independent learners and critical thinkers (9:330-31).

Specifically, Valencia maintained that a language arts portfolio is "larger than a report card but smaller and more focused than a steamer trunk of artifacts". It is like a large expandable folder that holds work samples selected by the student or teacher, teachers' observational notes, the students' own self-evaluations, and collaborative progress notes by the student and teacher. The varied items might include reading responses, reading logs, selected daily work, pieces of writing, classroom tests, checklists and audio or video tapes about or made by the student. Success comes in having a variety in the collection. This variety will ensure a

complete picture of the student's development (31:339).

The Process in Developing Student Portfolios

Before educators choose particular work to include in a portfolio, they must decide as a school, grade, district or state, their goals of instruction. According to Valencia, these goals must relate to the curriculum and instruction. They should be broad, not specific skills or individual lesson objectives. Once the goals are established, the educators must decide upon the type of instruction that will help the students meet these predetermined goals. Then the teacher and student must decide the objectives of individual work that will be included in the portfolio, if it is to be used as a meaningful assessment (31:338).

A study by Salinger and Chittenden, of the Educational Testing Service, demonstrated how a school district in South Brunswick, New Jersey established an Early Literacy Portfolio. The project grew from a broad effort to define a program that would be based upon the developmental levels of children in the early grades. As teachers developed a curriculum that focused on the children and their needs, it became necessary to change assessment as well. The teachers wanted more correlation between curriculum and assessment (39:446).

In the beginning of this Early Literacy Portfolio Project, the

portfolio depended on checklists and other indicators of students' growth in reading and writing. Then work samples and performance records were added. The components of the portfolio were writing samples, story telling records, oral reading records, invented spelling activities, and sight word inventories. Interviews with parents and students and self-portraits also were included (39:447).

The teachers in the Literacy Project developed specific guidelines for collecting the data. These collection methods allowed flexibility so that the teachers were able to adapt the process to fit their own classroom needs. The teachers involved in the project described their student portfolios as a teacher's record-keeping system that was based upon classroom performance. The portfolio was used for instructing, diagnosing and conferring with parents. The teachers felt that the portfolio system supported their goal of enabling students to become competent readers and writers (39:447).

According to Salinger and Chittenden, the teachers in the New Jersey schools also had to address accountability with their portfolio system. With the help of researchers and consultants, they developed a six-point scale of early literacy development. Each score or point represented what children could do in regard to their abilities to acquire literacy. At the middle and end of each school

year, the teachers evaluated the contents of the portfolios, assigned a score and reported the score to the district. Additionally, the teachers rated work samples of each colleagues' students. As a result, teachers in the project became more aware of other teachers' practices and expectations, which helped to promote a common theme for their assessment (39:447-48).

As a final evaluation of their work on the project in South Brunswick, New Jersey, the teachers were interviewed by consultant researchers. Through these interviews, the results of the study became known. The portfolio assessment process had supported their evaluation of a child's early literacy learning. The teachers felt the system was manageable. They experienced more correlation between instruction and assessment. As Salinger and Chittenden related, teachers' confidence in making sound instructional decisions became more evident and stronger parent communications developed (39:448).

Advantages of Student Portfolios

The definition and contents of portfolios vary. However, they all embrace three major concepts that benefit teachers, students, and parents: the correlation of curriculum with instruction and assessment; students involvement in their own learning and evaluation; and student growth over a period of time (38:666).

Valencia contended that through the use of portfolios, teachers engaged in self-reflection and self-evaluation. They looked at their curriculum critically and used the portfolio information as a basis for instructional decisions. The instructional decisions were based upon the students' strengths and weaknesses. Portfolio assessment helped to make teachers more aware of the processes of learning rather than just the outcomes (32:680).

The use of student portfolios had an impact upon teachers' classroom activities in a study at Kent State University. The Early Assessment for Exceptional Potential Project was funded through the Javits' Act. This research took place in classrooms that used a nontraditional assessment model. Teachers completed a portfolio for each child in the classroom. The portfolio included anecdotal records, observations of six sample lessons that reflected exceptional potential and specific examples of projects produced by the child (41:372).

The teachers in the Kent State Study reported changes in their teaching and management. They developed more child-centered classrooms that included cooperative learning, integrated curriculum, open-ended lessons and inquiry learning. They looked at the whole child and reflected upon the way each child learned. Their increased observational skills helped teachers to accept the

diversity in behavior and learning styles among their students (41: 374).

The researchers of this Kent State University study concluded that the portfolio assessment had a positive impact on classroom activities. They were surprised at the participants' freedom in taking risks and breaking curriculum barriers. The teachers felt more creative and revitalized (41:375).

For students in the study, the portfolios were most powerful in that they enabled these students to become responsible for their own learning. Students in portfolio classrooms were asked to take on more responsibility for selecting topics for their reading, planning theme work, choosing reading material and deciding on the criteria for projects. Thus the evaluations became more meaningful and purposeful to them (10:59).

Tierney related that in the portfolio classrooms, teachers and students were studying all the areas of student work. This included versatility, effort, achievement, growth in the use and understanding of a process and students' progress over a period of time. Through this evaluation process, students learned that quality work takes time and that collaboration during the process adds to their depth of thinking (10:59).

Flood and Lapp related an important advantage of the portfolio

for parents. Since the portfolio demonstrates a student's growth over a period of time, this concept is useful when reporting to parents. Parents should be shown tangible evidence of how much a student has learned. A single grade or score does not show the progress that has been made. By showing parents an array of data that has been collected throughout the year, the parents see the growth that their child has made. Flood and Lapp stated that data might include information from various types of testing, samples of the child's writing development and voluntary reading activities (15: 510-11).

De Fina summarized the advantages of portfolio assessment over standardized testing. Portfolios enable students to demonstrate their strengths and weaknesses whereas standardized testing stresses their shortcomings in a particular area. A test provides a one-time look at a child's accomplishments, but the portfolio provides many opportunities for observation and assessment. Further, the portfolios guide the instruction and curriculum and place the child at the center of instruction and learning (2:39).

Paulson added that portfolio assessment can provide a method for teachers and students to understand the learning process. Portfolios can encourage students to take charge of their own

learning when the students collect and reflect on their own work. In portfolios, instruction and assessment are interwoven. They support each other (25:61).

Problems Associated With Portfolios

Although professional literature praised the benefits of portfolios, Herman and Winters, directors at the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), expressed their concern for a lack of research that involved the technical quality of portfolios. They maintained that during the last ten years, most articles explained the virtues of portfolios and presented ways to develop and use them. Little information was reported, however, on technical data or accepted research methods (21:48).

Why is technical quality important? Herman and Winters stated that accurate information must be obtained from the portfolios if they are to be used to make important decisions about students, teachers and schools. The results of portfolio assessment must be reliable, consistent and meaningful estimates of what students know and can do (21:49).

Technical quality, as Herman and Winters described it, involved reliability and validity. Other experts referred to the portfolio's reliability as inter-rater agreement. When the raters

judge student work, they must agree on the scores assigned to the work. If they do not assign similar scores, then the scores are a measure of who does the scoring rather than the quality of the work. This inter-rater agreement is important because it forms the foundation for all decisions regarding the portfolio quality (21:49). Even though Herman and Winters saw this inter-rater agreement as a concern, they contended that available research showed that a consensus among the raters can be achieved. The consensus depends on well-defined criteria, effective training and scoring rubrics that are derived from a deep understanding of student performance (21: 51).

One researcher from CRESST, Gearhart along with Herman, further maintained a concern for portfolio validity. Even though, authentic reading and writing tasks are a better indicator of students' capabilities, they may overestimate a student's ability. Gearhart and Herman reported that students receive different levels of assistance and instruction. For example, the students may receive help in planning, drafting and revising the classroom writing assignment. This support is an indicator of good instruction but it does not show what a student can do without it. These researchers believe this is an important issue when the portfolios are used for large-scale assessment, not just for classroom assessment (21:52).

In his book on portfolio assessment, De Fina related an additional problem confronting educators who want to use portfolio assessment. He maintained that even though there is an occasional movement away from grades, the educational community still sees them as a fairly accurate indicator of a student's accomplishments. Class placement and rank as well as college placement decisions involve grade point averages (2:37).

If portfolios are used for assessment, De Fina contended, the grades will have to be determined and based upon the portfolio contents. Several methods can be devised to support this process. A comprehensive scoring system can be created for calculating student grades. Criteria could be established and the student would have to fulfill a certain percentage to obtain a score. More narrative statements could be included in the report card. Parent-student-teacher portfolio conferences could be used in place of report cards or be used to explain the report card as it relates to the portfolio contents (2:38).

Additionally, Tierney stated that the report card provides a narrow view of a child's reading and writing experiences. Letter grades tend to compare students and evaluate them as a success or failure. They do not show the ongoing learning that may be taking place. Tierney and his colleagues suggested that teachers keep the

report card as open-ended as possible, focusing on the students' achievements rather than their failures, including a wide variety of topics which could be evidenced in the portfolios. Further, the teachers should involve the students as much as possible in completing the report (10:140).

Salinger and Chittenden, reported teacher concerns in their Early Literacy Portfolio Study. Their concerns involved the management of the portfolios and their components. Some of the teachers in their study noted that collecting data for each child throughout the school year required organization and time. It required teacher time spent on individual or small groups while the remainder of the class was engaged in other work (39:450).

Herman and Winters related substantial demands on teachers' time when using the portfolios for assessment. Results from their study of Vermont's statewide portfolio assessment program concluded that the teachers in the program spent seventeen hours a month choosing portfolio tasks, preparing portfolio lessons, and evaluating the contents. Sixty percent of the teachers in the Vermont study stated that they lacked sufficient time to develop portfolio lessons (21:53).

Mandated or Standardized Portfolios

Koretz and other researchers at CRESST related that at least two states, Kentucky and Vermont have made portfolios part of their statewide assessment program. The Vermont program has been in development since 1988. It has been the country's first attempt at using a state-mandated portfolio assessment. The two main goals were to collect high-quality assessment information and to improve instruction. The most important component was the use of portfolios in mathematics and writing in grades four and eight (49:1).

Koretz and his colleagues explained the Vermont program in their technical report. In grade four, the writing assessment included a 'best piece' that was selected by the student and a letter explaining the composition of the piece. The assessment also included a poem, short story, a personal narrative and response from another subject area. The portfolio work was evaluated on purpose, organization, details, tone and grammar. A uniform writing test was also included. This test was scored in the same way as the portfolio contents (49:4).

In 1990 RAND, a partner in CRESST, began evaluating the Vermont program. The researchers found the reliability of the scores in the two years of the study remained around forty percent

in both writing and mathematics in grades four and eight. According to Viadero, this low percentage was attributed to weak interrater reliability. There was inconsistency among the portfolio readers in assigning the same scores to a single portfolio. A standardized test, machine-scored, is 100 percent reliable. When scoring involves human judgment, reliability decreases. Therefore, Vermont could not accurately report the information obtained from the mandated portfolios (33:8).

Arts Propel is another area testing the use of portfolios. Arts Propel was a five-year project that involved practicing artists, researchers from Harvard Project Zero and Educational Testing Service, students, art specialists and teachers from the Pittsburgh public school systems. It was supported by the Arts and Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation. The purpose of the Arts Propel project was to develop an instruction-based assessment model (51:29).

The Arts Propel project became the basis of a portfolio system of assessment that was used in the Pittsburgh public schools. In the Pittsburgh portfolio project, students in grades five through twelve assembled writing portfolios. These students had to compose, revise and reflect upon their writing. This reflective part included student comments concerning the processes they used, purposes for

their writings, how they assessed their own work and the direction of their future projects. These portfolios included six pieces of work (21:50).

Herman and Winters related the research findings. The portfolios were rated by Arts Propel and other teachers. These raters were free to select any work in the student's portfolio. The work was rated on writing accomplishment, process and resource use, and growth and engagement. Even though raters were allowed to select any work, the interrater agreement correlations were from .60 to .70. Furthermore, when two raters evaluated the same work, agreement was in the eighty percent range. Even though reliability is easiest to achieve when there is uniformity among the portfolio contents and well-developed rubrics, these results showed that "reliability is possible when the contents are loosely structured" (21:50).

Another research project that involved mandated portfolios was conducted by Irwin-DeVitis at Binghamton University. Irwin-DeVitis studied a group of teachers who were using literacy portfolios in their classrooms at the same time the school district was moving toward mandated and standardized portfolio assessment. She related that the teachers in her study group had concerns about mandating portfolios. They valued portfolio

assessment as an authentic evaluation system that provided information to the students, their parents and teachers. However, the mandated portfolios were based on preset categories and the teachers in the study group felt the students would lack a voice in choosing the contents (13:230).

Similar concerns were expressed by Case who is a teacher-consultant for The New York Writing Project. She contended that one of the strongest features of using the portfolio is that they allow students to reflect on their own learning. Mandating the portfolios may destroy this feature. If standards are established by an outside authority, there is less collaboration and a lack of interest in the student's own goals and learning (12:46).

However, Case maintained that standardized portfolios can be adopted in such a way that student empowerment is not lost. She stated that the students could be informed as to the ways their work would be judged. The students could be encouraged to plan their work in ways that would help them learn best. Their scores could be based on performance and how well they achieved their own goals (12:47).

Future of Portfolios in Education

To date, the case for widespread use of portfolios in the

classroom is not supported by significant research. De Fina noted that research does not support the use of portfolios as a method to improve student learning or as a better alternative to standardized testing. De Fina added that studies do show how teachers think and feel about the positive effects of portfolio use. Since these teachers view their students and their accomplishments on a daily basis, their conclusions cannot be discounted. The evidence collected in the portfolios cannot be ignored either because it shows both the process and the product, which no standardized test could illustrate (2:65).

Herman and Winters also stated that the literature does not provide enough information in regard to how well the new practices of assessment are being implemented. They believe that it is too early to expect the few operational portfolio assessment projects to influence student outcomes. Those implementing these projects hope that at least they have cultivated an awareness for research to address assessment concerns and policies (21:55).

Similarly, Calfee stated that alternative assessment such as portfolios must still prove themselves. The move toward authentic assessment brings hope of broader changes in curriculum and instruction, more valid indicators of achievement outcomes, and enhancement of the teaching profession. Yet, Calfee added that many

handicaps exist. Some of these handicaps include a lack of time and money and low teacher interest (44:7).

Calfee also stated that the future of portfolios may rest with the local school and classroom teacher. For portfolio assessment to be successful, two important areas need to be addressed: assessment practices must be consistent with all the teachers in a school and the audience and purpose for the assessment must be established. Teachers will become discouraged if the portfolios do not play an important role in the school community (44:7-8).

Calfee and Perfumo stated that alternative assessment and portfolios are part of a package, which includes whole language, cooperative teaching and school-based decision-making. All of these together offer an opportunity for fundamental reform in United States schooling. These researchers see teachers who are enthusiastic and committed to portfolio assessment. Yet, Calfee and Perfumo expressed concern that the portfolio movement may fail unless it meets internal classroom needs for instructional purposes and external policy demands for accountability (46:10).

Summary

In conclusion, the current literature strongly supported the use of portfolios as an important and viable means of assessment. Yet, only a limited number of studies and projects have been reported on

the use of portfolios. According to Gomez, Graue and Bloch, more research and study would need to be done before portfolios could become a widely accepted tool of the assessment process in education (17:621). Calfee added that much progress has been made in curriculum, instruction and assessment during the last fifty years. Educators can continue to find ways to improve in these above-noted areas and the portfolio concept is one way (44:9).

CHAPTER 3

Methods And Procedures

Introduction

This study provided data concerning the professional views of elementary teachers in Randolph County, West Virginia about the method of assessment that is being used. The study determined the extent of portfolio use in the evaluation process in Randolph County. It revealed differences in assessment practices within the lower and upper elementary grades there.

The research was conducted within the Randolph County school system. Randolph County, with a geographical area of 1,046 square miles, is one of the largest counties east of the Mississippi. The county has eleven elementary schools. Seven of them are located in rural areas of the county. Two rural schools, Harman and Pickens, include grades kindergarten through twelfth. Pickens School is located approximately thirty miles southeast of Elkins, which is the county seat. Six of the elementary schools are kindergarten through fifth grade. These schools are Beverly Elementary School, Coalton Elementary School, Jennings Randolph Elementary School, Midland Elementary School, North Elementary School and Third Ward Elementary School. Beverly Elementary School and Coalton Elementary School are rural schools. Three other rural schools

comprise kindergarten through sixth grade. They are George Ward Elementary School, Homestead Elementary School and Valley Head Elementary School. Valley Head is located approximately 35 miles south of Elkins. The elementary population of these schools is 2,269 and 108 elementary teachers staff these schools. About 50 percent of this student population qualify for free and reduced lunch (52:np).

Collection of Data

Data collection proceeded after a written letter was sent to Randolph County Superintendent Mr. Larry Prichard seeking permission to conduct a survey among the elementary teachers of Randolph County. The survey was given to the elementary teachers in grades kindergarten through sixth in the eleven elementary schools in Randolph County. The surveys were distributed by Faculty Senate presidents at the schools and were returned by Randolph County Schools' mail system. Refer to Appendixes A and B to see the request for permission to survey and the teacher questionaire.

The survey included ten questions and a comment section. The first two questions determined the grade level and the type of student evaluation that is being utilized in the classroom. Three of the questions pertained specifically to portfolios--the purposes that they serve and what is included in them. Two questions asked

teaching and student learning is affected by portfolio use. Two questions on the survey involved the advantages and disadvantages of using portfolios in the evaluation process. A final question asked which type of assessment is preferable. Additional comments concerning student assessment were addressed in the last section.

Treatment of Data

After collecting the teacher surveys, the data were compiled and reported in narratives and graphs. Survey question numbers one and two provided the grade level and type of assessment that is being used. These responses were combined. The data results were graphed to show the number of teachers who are using traditional letter grades, checklists of skills, portfolios or a combination of these assessment methods. Any similarities or differences in assessment among the lower and upper elementary grades were discussed and graphed.

Question three determined the number of teachers who include the portfolio in the assessment process. The data were discussed and graphed. Any similarities and differences among grade levels were discussed and graphed also. Question four established the number of teachers who use portfolios during parent-teacher conferences. The data were discussed and graphed as in question

three.

Question five revealed what items are included in the portfolio. This information was graphed. The information collected in questions six and seven determined how portfolios have affected teaching methods and student learning. The data from these two questions were discussed and graphed.

Questions eight and nine revealed the advantages and disadvantages of portfolio use. The information received from these two questions and additional comments from question eleven were discussed and graphed. Finally, question number ten which established an assessment preference was graphed. Any similarities or differences among lower and upper elementary teachers was addressed in this question also.

Summary

This study determined the number of elementary teachers in Randolph County who use portfolio assessment. The data revealed what is included in a portfolio and how the portfolios are used. The data also reflected the advantages and disadvantages of portfolio assessment.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

This chapter presents data collected through elementary school teacher surveys. The graphs depict the yes and no questions and the pie charts show the questions that required information or opinions in their answers. Where applicable the results were compared with teachers in grades, kindergarten through three and upper grade teachers, grades four through six. Each graph is accompanied by an explanation of the percentages.

Presentation of Data

Teacher survey questions number one and two asked the respondents to indicate their grade level assignment and the method of assessment that they currently are using in this assignment. The graphs in Figure 4.1 which can be found on page 39 depict the percentages of their responses.

Eighteen percent of the teachers in kindergarten, first, second and third grades use letter grades. Five percent of the lower grade teachers completing the surveys reported using checklists of skills. Nine percent noted that they utilize portfolios in their student assessment. Various combinations of assessment methods are being used also. A combination of portfolios and checklists of skills are

being used by forty-three percent of the lower grade teachers responding. Five percent use letter grades and portfolios. Eleven percent combine letter grades and checklists of skills in their assessment methods. Nine percent combine all three of the methods--grades, checklists and portfolios.

Eighty-four percent of the teachers in grades four, five and six reported use the traditional report card. Twelve percent use a combination of report card and portfolios. Four percent use checklists of skills and portfolios.

Survey question number three asked teachers to respond yes or no if they were including portfolios in the evaluation process. Their yes and no responses are shown in Figure 4.2 which can be found on page 39.

Seventy percent of the teachers in kindergarten through third grade, who responded to the survey, use portfolios in student evaluations. While only twelve percent of the teachers in grades four through six include portfolios in the evaluation process. Thirty percent of the lower grade teachers do not include portfolios and eighty-eight percent of the upper grade teachers do not use portfolios as they assess their students' work.

Survey question number four asked the respondents if they included student portfolios in parent-teacher conferences. Seventy-

Methods of Evaluating Students

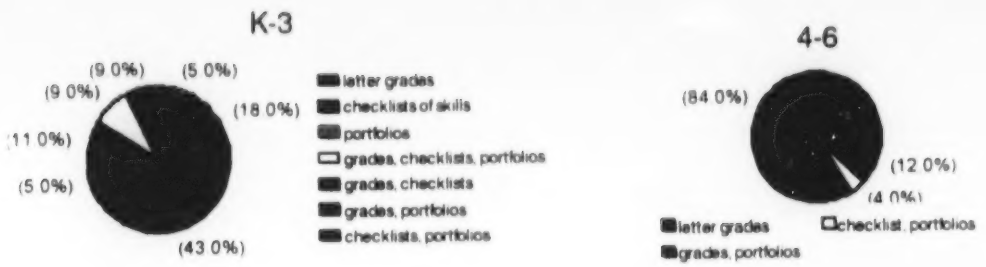

Figure 4.1
Methods of Evaluating Students

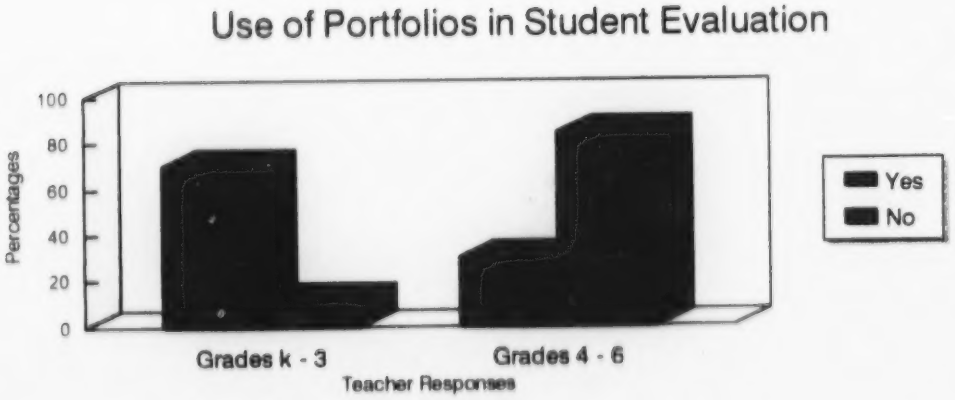

Figure 4.2
Use of Portfolios in Student Evaluations

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

five percent of the teachers, in grades kindergarten through third, include portfolios in parent-teacher conferences whereas twenty-five percent did not include them. Of the teachers in grades four through six, who completed the surveys, thirty-six percent use student portfolios as they conference with parents and sixty-four percent do not. These percentages are depicted in Figure 4.3 which can be found on page 41.

Question number five on the survey asked teachers, who use portfolios, to list the contents of their student portfolios. The respondents listed at least two samples of work that they include in the portfolios. Thirty-four percent of the teachers include students' daily work. Twenty-seven percent use test results and twenty percent include creative writing activities. Five percent of the respondents have journal writing activities in their students' portfolios. Three percent include observational notes; four percent include audio tapes of oral reading; one percent, correspondence with parents; three percent, behavior notes and three percent include skills that need to be retaught.

These samples and percentages are shown in Figure 4.4 which can be found on page 41. The numbers on the pie chart refer to the percentages of the items listed by the teachers on their surveys.

Survey question number six asked, "If you use portfolios, do

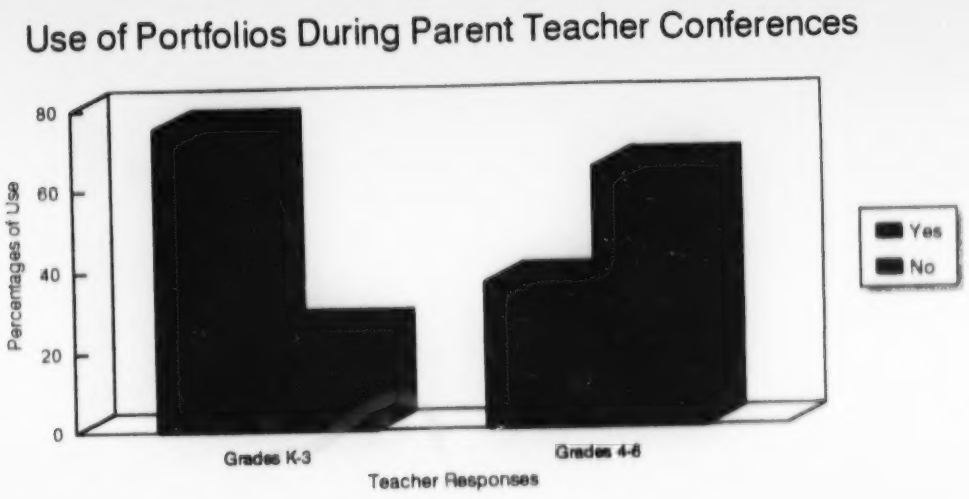

Figure 4.3
Use of Portfolios During Parent-Teacher Conferences

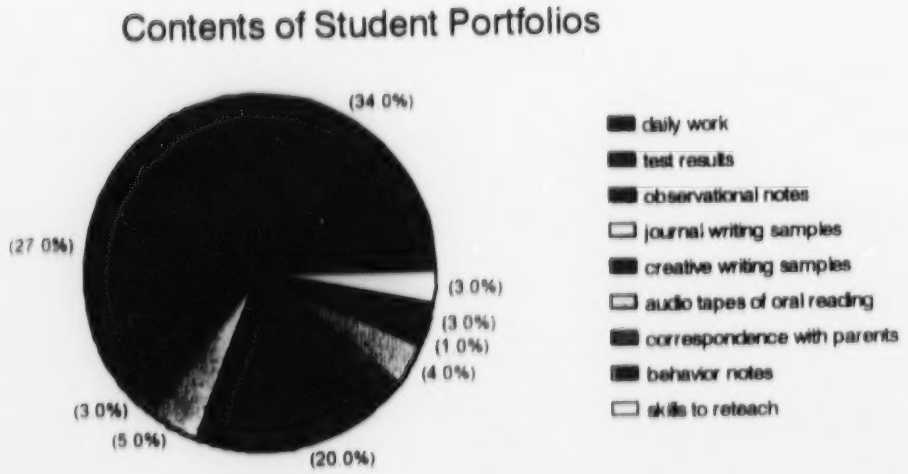

Figure 4.4
Contents of Student Portfolios

you feel that their use has influenced your teaching?" Thirty percent of the teachers in kindergarten through third grade felt that portfolios had influenced their teaching and seventy percent noted that portfolios did not affect their teaching.

Eight percent of the teachers in grades four through six responded that the portfolios had influenced their teaching while ninety-two percent noted that the portfolios did not affect their teaching.

Specific ways in which portfolios have impacted upon the respondents teaching methods are discussed in the *Analysis of the Data*. section of this article. The percentage results of this survey question are shown in Figure 4.5 which can be found on page 43.

Survey question number seven asked, "Do you feel that portfolios affect student learning?" The percentage results of this survey question are shown in Figure 4.6 which can be found on page 43. Fifty-nine percent of the lower grade teachers felt that the portfolios affect student learning. Forty-one percent did not feel that portfolios influenced student learning.

Twenty-eight percent of the teachers, grades four through six, responded that portfolios affect student learning. Seventy-two percent felt that portfolios did not influence student learning.

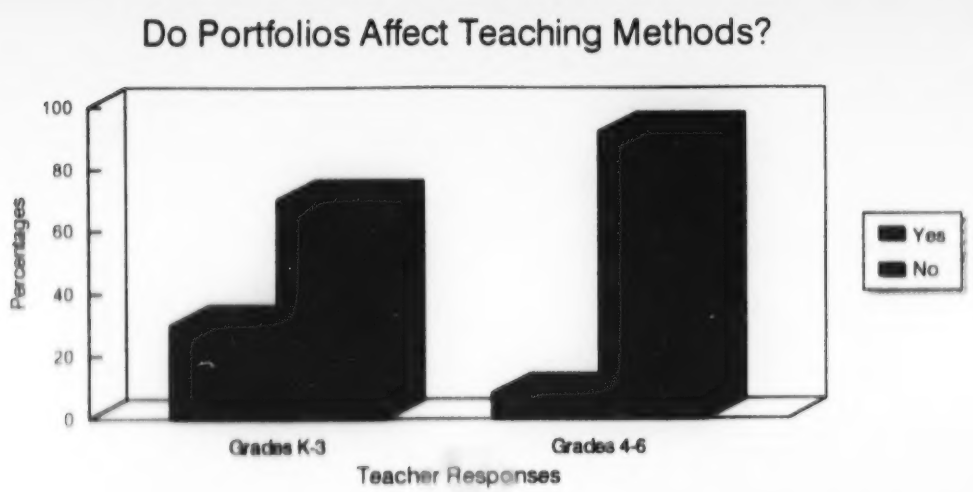

Figure 4.5
Do Portfolios Affect Teaching Methods?

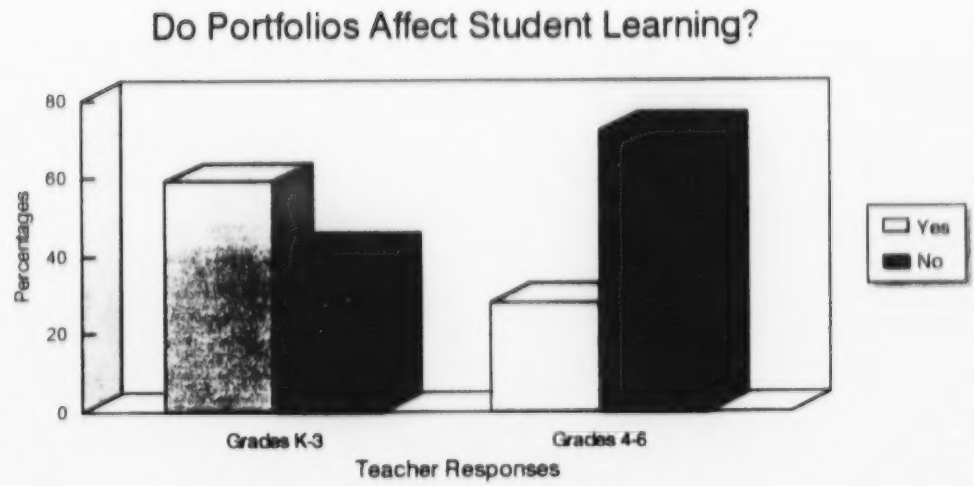

Figure 4.6
Do Portfolios Affect Student Learning?

As in survey question number six, specific ways in which respondents noted that portfolios have impacted on student learning is discussed in the *Analysis of the Data.* section of this article.

Question number eight asked survey respondents to list positive benefits of portfolio evaluation. Sixty-one percent responded to this question. The types of benefits and the percentages of each benefit is found in Figure 4.7 which can be found on page 45.

Of those responding, fifty percent noted that portfolios allow them to view students' progress over a long period of time. Twenty-one percent of the teachers see portfolios as a benefit for parents in the same way. Several other benefits were noted. Two percent stated that portfolio evaluation improves a child's self-concept. Five percent noted less pressure on students because letter grades are not emphasized. Limiting competition was a benefit in five percent of the responses. Fifteen percent felt that portfolios strengthened individual needs by providing teachers with information regarding a student's weak skills. Lastly, two percent felt that portfolio evaluation required less time than assigning letter grades to students' work.

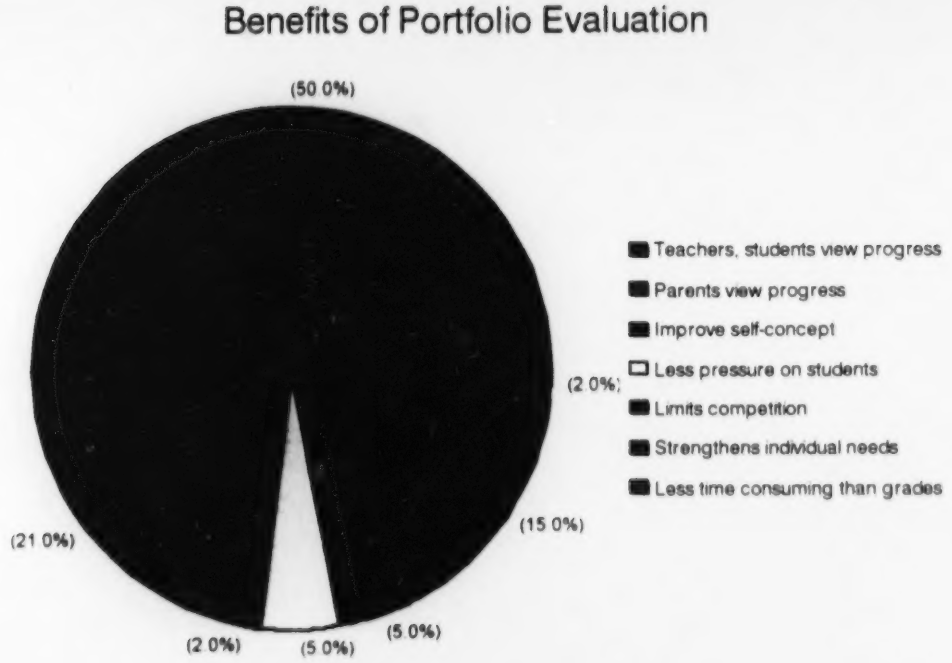

Figure 4.7
Benefits of Portfolio Evaluation

The respondents in survey question number nine listed disadvantages of portfolio evaluation. The items that they listed and the percentages of each item are located in Figure 4.8 which can be found on page 47.

Two disadvantages involved parents of the students. Nine percent of the teachers stated that parents do not have access to a student's daily work when it is kept in the portfolio and nine percent felt that parents wanted to see letter grades on a report card. Fifty-three percent of those responding saw too much teacher time spent on collecting and evaluating the portfolios. Thirteen percent noted a lack of storage space in the classroom, where the portfolios could be kept. Seven percent believe that portfolio evaluations are too subjective and a lack of consistency was noted by nine percent of the teachers. They referred to this lack of consistency to mean that not all teachers, throughout the grades, use portfolios.

Question number ten on the survey asked, "Which type of assessment do you prefer?" The respondents choices and the percentages are shown in Figure 4.9 which can be found on page 47.

Thirty-two percent of the lower grade teachers prefer the traditional report card. Eighteen percent selected checklists of skills and two percent chose the portfolio method of assessment. Various combinations of these were noted also.

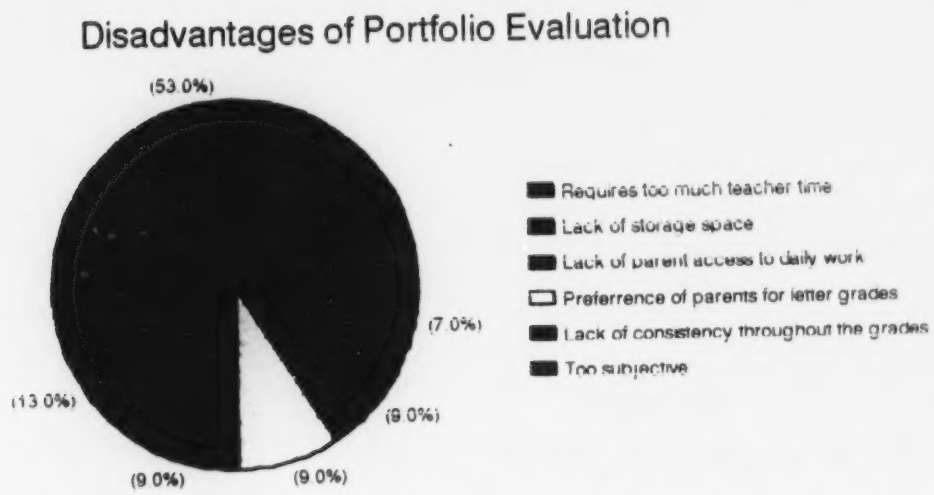

Figure 4.8
Disadvantages of Portfolio Evaluation

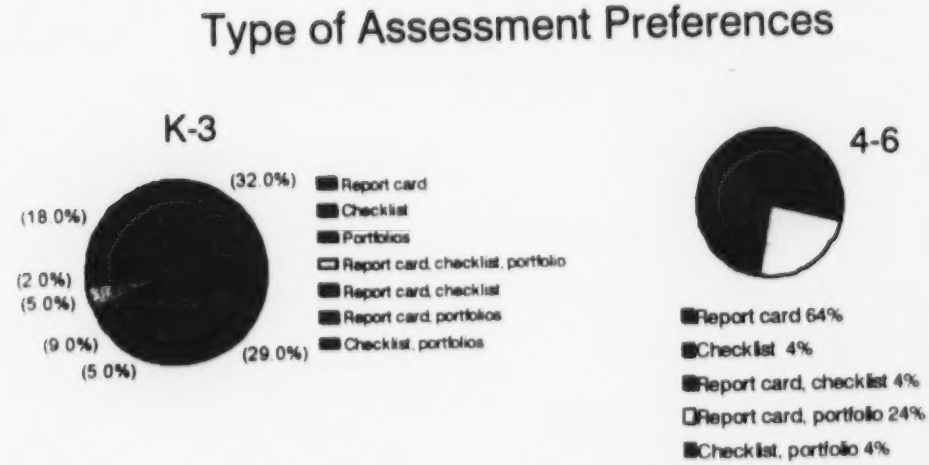

Figure 4.9
Type of Assessment Preference

Twenty-nine percent of the respondents chose a checklists of skills and portfolios. Five percent selected the report card and portfolios. Nine percent selected the report card with letter grades and checklists of skills. Whereas, five percent noted their choice of all three types of assessment—report card, checklists of skills and portfolios.

Sixty-four percent, of the respondents in grades four through six, chose the report card with letter grades. Four percent selected checklists of skills and four percent preferred a combination of report card and checklists. Four percent of the teachers noted their preferrence for checklists of skills and portfolios. Lastly, twenty-four percent liked a combination of the traditional report card and portfolios in their assessment of student learning.

Explanation and Analysis of Data

A total of sixty-nine surveys were obtained out of 108 total surveys that were sent out to all the elementary teachers in Randolph County, West Virginia. Forty-four of these surveys were collected from teachers in grades kindergarten through three. Twenty-five surveys were returned from teachers in grades four through six.

Question number one revealed differences between the upper and lower grade teachers as to how they assess student learning.

More kindergarten through third grade teachers use a checklist of skills and portfolios while the majority of teachers in grades four through six utilize the traditional report card. The results of this question are shown as percentages in the pie charts, Figure 4.1 which is on page 39 in the *Presentation of Data* section of this chapter.

Similarly, question number three revealed a difference between lower and upper grade teachers in their use of portfolio assessment. The graph in Figure 4.2 which is on page 39 shows the percentages of each group of teachers who use portfolios as part of the evaluation process. As shown on the graph, seventy percent of the lower grade teachers use portfolios and only twelve percent of the upper grade teachers utilize portfolios in their student evaluations.

Question number four revealed a higher percentage of teachers include portfolios in parent-teacher conferences than in student evaluations. Seventy-five percent of the lower grade teachers utilize them for conference purposes, while thirty-six percent of the upper grade teachers include them in parent-teacher conferences. These percentages may be found in Figure 4.3 which is on page 41.

Teacher survey question number five pertained to the contents

of the portfolios. Percentages of the items included in the portfolios my be obtained from the pie chart in Figure 4.4 which is on page 41 in the *Presentation of Data* section of this article. More teachers include samples of their students' daily work. Two other samples that are important, according to the respondents, are tests results and creative writing activities. To a lesser degree, the teachers include their own observational notes, journal writing samples, audio tapes of their students' oral reading, correspondence notes to and from parents, behavior notes and examples of skills to be retaught.

How portfolios affect teaching methods was noted in question number six. Percentages may be obtained from the graph in Figure 4.5 which is on page 43 of the *Presentation of Data* section of this article. More teachers, throughout all the grades, felt that portfolios did not affect their teaching than those who felt that they did influence their instruction. The teachers who agreed that portfolios improve their teaching stated various reasons why this occurs. Some teachers believe that portfolios guide their instruction. They use the work samples in the portfolios to design small group skill lessons. Others commented that they conduct more writing activities, which they include in the portfolios. One teacher felt that the instruction was more focused because she or he was

more aware of the students' strengths and weaknesses as evidenced in the portfolios. All of the teachers who use portfolios concluded that the portfolios allow them to see their students' progress daily and over a longer period of time.

Survey question number seven regarded the influence of portfolios on student learning. More lower grade teachers use portfolios, while fifty-nine percent believe that portfolios affect student learning. Whereas, fewer upper grade teachers use portfolios and only twenty-eight percent believe they influence student learning. The actual percentages of portfolio influence on student learning can be found in Figure 4.6 which is on page 43. Teachers gave varied reasons as to how the portfolios strengthen student learning. Many felt that students become more responsible and conscientious if they know that their work is collected and viewed by themselves, their teachers and parents. The teachers also stated that it is important for students to see their own progress and portfolios allow them to do this.

Survey question number eight asked for advantages of using portfolios in student evaluations. These benefits, that the teachers listed on their surveys, and the compilation of percentages can be found in *Presentation of Data*, Figure 4.7 which is on page 45. Many teachers responded that the portfolios provide a long time view of a

student's progress which is helpful when providing individual activities for them. The teachers felt that seeing a child's progress over a long period of time was helpful to parents also. Teachers noted the benefits of portfolios for the students--improves a student's self-concept, lessens pressure to make a grade and strengthens individual weaknesses.

The disadvantages of using portfolios in the evaluation process was discussed by the respondents in question number nine. The results of this survey question is shown in Figure 4.8 which is on page 47 in the *Presentation of Data* section. One of the major problems presented by the respondents was the time involved in collecting and organizing the contents of the portfolios. One teacher commented that this time could be better utilized by planning and presenting effective instruction. Another concern that several teachers had involved the lack of storage space in the classroom for portfolios. Teachers also noted two disadvantages that involved parents. They stated that many parents like to see the student work sent home to be reviewed frequently rather than periodically as would be done if the work was kept in a portfolio. The teachers also feel that parents prefer a report card with letter grades. The grades give parents concrete evidence of their child's success or failure. Another concern that teachers mentioned was the fact that not all

teachers 'do' portfolios. Thus an inconsistency exists as to how much emphasis should be placed upon the portfolio evaluation.

The type of assessment that teachers prefer was provided in survey question number ten. Their choices and percentages of each choice can be found in Figure 4.9 which is on page 47 of the *Presentation of Data* section. Two choices dominated the lower grade teacher selection. These were the traditional report card and a combination of checklists and portfolios. The report card by itself or in combination with another type of assessment received fifty-one percent of the respondents' choices. However, among the upper grade teachers, grades four through six, the report card by itself or in combination was selected by ninety-two percent. Interestingly, several of the upper grade teachers stated that the portfolios should be used by the kindergarten through third grade teachers in their evaluative process.

Summary

The data in this survey suggests that portfolios are an important form of assessment especially if they are used with other evaluative processes. Even critics of their use, still feel that portfolios provide a unique collection of each child's work which benefits teachers, parents and students themselves.

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter presents recommendations on the use of portfolio assessment in the elementary classroom. The recommendations have been made after examination of the teacher surveys. Answers to the problems presented in Chapter One have been explored.

Restatement and Conclusions of the Problem

Should portfolio assessment replace the traditional report card or be used in combination with other types of assessment? The majority of elementary teachers in Randolph County prefer the report card with its letter grades over portfolios or a combination of assessment methods. However, the teacher surveys showed that a combination approach is being utilized by a large number of teachers in Randolph County. The use of a wide variety of assessment methods, as reported in the teacher surveys, is due to the fact that Randolph County does not have a consistent method of evaluating students throughout the elementary grades.

Restatement of the Research Questions and Their Answers

1. Are student portfolios being used in the process of evaluating students' academic performance? The majority of

Randolph County elementary teachers do not use student portfolios as part of the evaluation process.

2. What do teachers believe is an important advantage and disadvantage of student portfolios? The majority of Randolph County elementary teachers stated and important advantage of portfolios is that they provide evidence of students' growth over a period of time. The teachers believe this to be an important value to them and to the parents. The majority of Randolph County elementary teachers stated an important disadvantage of portfolios is the amount of teacher time that is required in collecting and organizing the data for the portfolios.

3. Does the use of student portfolios affect teaching methods and student learning? The majority of Randolph County elementary teachers answered no.

4. If given a choice, which do teachers prefer--portfolio assessment, traditional letter grades, checklists of skills or a combination of these? The majority of Randolph County elementary teachers prefer a combination of report card and checklists of skills or report card and portfolio.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based upon three factors.

Student work must be evaluated at periodic times throughout the school year. This evaluation should be accomplished in a consistent manner throughout the lower grades. It should be supported by a collection of tangible and authentic work samples.

Since lower and upper grade teachers expressed different preferences and needs, two different assessment models should be used. One model should include the report card with letter grades for the upper grade student assessment and the other should be checklists of skills for the lower grades. In addition, the teachers should collect and keep in a portfolio, work samples of each student. The work should support the letter grades on the report card or the accomplishments on checklists of skills.

Criteria, as to the work included in the portfolio, should be established. This would help to insure a consistent collection of work at each grade level and to provide a wide view of students' continued growth.

Summary

The elementary school teachers are employing a variety of assessment processes to evaluate their students. The report card alone or in combination with other assessment methods remains the most important method of student evaluation. Even though teachers

see advantages in using portfolios in the process, they have not embraced their use as a separate system of assessment.

More discussion and research will need to be done before teachers are ready to implement portfolio assessment. As Routman noted, teachers will have to be ready to place students at the center of the evaluation process. When this occurs portfolios can be used as they are intended, for students' self-evaluation, reflection, and learning (9:332).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

1. Cunningham, Patricia M. and Richard L. Allington. Classrooms That Work They Can All Read and Write. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.

2. De Fina, Allan A. Portfolio Assessment. New York: Scholastic, 1992.

3. Eisele, Beverly. Managing the Whole Language Classroom. Cypress: Creative Teaching, 1991.

4. Graves, Donald H. and Bonnie S. Sunstein, eds. Portfolio Portraits. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992.

5. Jasmine, Julia. Portfolio Assessment. Huntington Beach: Teacher Created Materials, 1992.

6. Merrilees, Cindy. Strengthening Student Learning in Elementary Classrooms. Middleburg: R. E. A. D. Publications, 1993.

7. Mundell, Susan B. and Karen DeLario. Practical Portfolios. Englewood: Teacher Ideas Press, 1994.

8. Porter, Carol and Janell Cleland. The Portfolio As a Learning Strategy. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1995.

9. Routman, Regie. Invitations. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991.

10. Tierney, Robert J. , Mark A. Carter and Laura E. Desai. Portfolio Assessment in the Reading - Writing Classroom. Norwood: Christopher - Gordon, 1991.

Journals

11. Bracey, Gerald W. "Portfolios in Vermont." Phi Delta Kappan 76, no. 8 (1995): 646-647.

12. Case, Susan H. "Will Mandating Portfolios Undermine Their Value?" Educational Leadership 52, no. 2 (1994): 46-47.

13. Devitis, Linda Irwin. "Teachers' Voices: Literacy Portfolios in the Classroom and Beyond." Reading Research and Instruction 35, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 223-236.

14. Farr, Roger. "I Have a Dream About Assessment." The Reading Teacher 49, no. 5 (1996): 424.

15. Flood, James and Diane Lapp. "Reporting Reading Progress: A Comparison Portfolio For Parents." The Reading Teacher 42, no.7 (1989): 508-514.

16. Gardner, Howard. "On Assessment in the Arts: A Conversation With Howard Gardner." ed. Ron Brandt. Educational Leadership 45, no. 4 (1987-88): 30-34.

17. Gomez, Mary Louise, Elizabeth M. Graue, and Marianne N. Bloch. "Reassessing Portfolio Assessment: Rhetoric and Reality." Language Arts 68, no. 8 (1991): 620-621, 627-628.

18. Hansen, Jane. "Literacy Portfolios: Helping Students Know Themselves." Educational Leadership 49, no.8 (1992): 66-68.

19. Hebert, Elizabeth A. "Portfolios Invite Reflections From Students and Staff." Educational Leadership 49, no. 8 (1992): 58-61.

20. Hebert, Elizabeth A. with Laurie Schultz. "The Power of Portfolios." Educational Leadership 53, no. 7 (1996): 70-71.

21. Herman, Joan L. and Lynn Winters. "Portfolio Research: A

Slim Collection." Educational Leadership 52, no. 2 (1994): 48-55.

22. Jongsma, Kathleen Stumpf. "Portfolio Assessment." The Reading Teacher 43, no. 3 (1989): 264-265.

23. Kuhs, Therese M. "Portfolio Assessment: Making It Work for the First Time." The Mathematics Teacher 87, no. 5 (1994): 332-335.

24. Mathews, Jackie K. "From Computer Management to Portfolio Assessment." The Reading Teacher 43, no. 6 (1990): 420-421.

25. Paulson, F. Leon. "What Makes a Portfolio a Portfolio?" Educational Leadership 48, no. 5 (1991): 60-63.

26. Pikulski, John J. "The Assessment of Reading: A Time for Change?"' The Reading Teacher 43, no. 1 (l989): 80-81.

27. Siegel, Janna and Michael F. Shaughnessy. "Educating for Understanding An Interview With Howard Gardner." Phi Delta Kappan 75, no. 7 (1994): 563-565.

28. Simmons, Jay. "Portfolios as Large-Scale Assessment." Language Arts 67, no. 3 (1990): 262-268.

29. Stewart, Roger A. "Portfolios: Agents of Change." The Reading Teacher 46, no. 6 (1993): 522-523.

30. Valencia, Sheila W. "Alternating Assessment: Separating the Wheat From the Chaff." The Reading Teacher 44, no. 1 (1990): 60-61.

31. Valencia, Sheila W. "A Portfolio Approach to Classroom Reading Assessment: The Whys, Whats, and Hows." TheReading Teacher 43, no. 4 (1990): 338-340.

32. Valencia, Sheila W. and Scott G. Paris. "Portfolio Assessment for Young Readers." The Reading Teacher 44, no. 9

(1991): 680-682.

33. Viadero, Debra. "Even As Popularity Soars, Portfolios Encounter Roadblocks." Education Week 14, no. 41 (1995): 8-9.

34. Wolf, Dennie Palmer. "Portfolio Assessment: Sampling Student Work." Educational Leadership 45, no. 4 (1987-88): 35-39.

Eric Sources

35. Benoit, Joyce and Hua Yang. "A Redefinition of Portfolio Assessment Based Upon Purpose: Findings and Implications From a Large-Scale Program." Journal of Research and Development in Education 29, no. 3 (spring 96): 181-191.

36. Nathan, Ruth. "Parents, Projects, and Portfolios: Round Community Building in Room 14." Language Arts 72, no. 2 (1995): 82-87.

37. Noden, Harry and Barbara Moss. eds. "A Guide to Books On Portfolios: Rafting the Rivers of Assessment." The Reading Teacher 48, no. 2 (1994): 180-183.

38. Place, Nancy and Sheila W. Valencia. "Portfolios: A Process for Enhancing Teaching and Learning." ed. Patricia S. Koskinen. The Reading Teacher 47, no. 8 (1994): 666-669.

39. Salinger, Terry and Edward Chittenden. "Analysis of an Early Literacy Portfolio: Consequences for Instruction." Language Arts 71, no. 6 (1994): 446-452.

40. Siegel, Janna and Michael F. Shaughnessy. "An Interview With Howard Gardner Educating for Understanding." Phi Delta Kappan 75, no. 7 (1994): 563-566.

41. Viechnicki, Karen J. , Nancy Barbour, Beverly Shaklee, Jane Rohrer, and Richard Ambrose. "The Impact of Portfolio Assessment On Teacher Classroom Activities." Journal of

Teacher Education 44, no. 5 (1993): 371-377.

42. Vizyak, Lindy. "Student Portfolios: Building Self-Reflection in a First Grade Classroom." The Reading Teacher 48, no. 4 (1994-95): 362-364.

43. Wolf, Shelby A. and Maryl Gearhart. "Writing What You Read: Narrative Assessment As a Learning Event." Language Arts 7l, no. 6 (1994): 425-428.

Other Sources

44. Calfee, Robert C. Occasional Paper No. 39. "Ahead to the Past: Assessing Student Achievement in Writing." Berkeley University of California, National Center for the Study of Writing (Aug. 1994).

45. Calfee, Robert C. Technical Report No. 69. "Implications of Cognitive Psychology for Authentic Assessment and Instruction." Berkeley: University of California, National Center for the Study of Writing (May 1994).

46. Calfee, Robert C. and Pam Perfumo. Technical Report No. 65. "Student Portfolios and Teacher Logs: Blueprint for a Revolution in Assessment." Berkeley: University of California, National Center for the Study of Writing (Apr. 1993).

47. Freedman, Sarah Warshauer. Occasional Paper No. 27. "Evaluating Writing: Linking Large-Scale Testing and Classroom Assessment." Berkeley: University of California, National Center for the Study of Writing (May 1991).

48. Gearhart, Maryl and Joan L. Herman. Technical Report No. 363. "Portfolio Assessment: Whose Work Is It? Issues in the Use of Classroom Assessments for Accountability." Los Angeles: University of California, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (Winter 1995).

49. Koretz, Daniel, Brian Stecher, Stephen Klein, and Daniel

McCaffrey. Technical Report 385. "The Evolution of a Portfolio Program: The Impact and Quality of the Vermont Program in Its Second Year (1992-93)." Los Angeles: University of California, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) (Aug. 1994).

50. Portfolio. The Newsletter of Arts Propel. Harvard Project Zero. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Graduate School of Education no. 4 (Dec. 1989).

51. Portfolio. The Newsletter of Arts Propel. Harvard Project Zero. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Graduate School of Education no. 5 (Feb. 1989).

52. Randolph County Update of Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plan. Clifford Wilmoth, Director. Submitted Nov. 1, 1993. Randolph County Board of Educational, Elkins.

53. Wolf, Shelby and Maryl Gearhart. Technical Report 358. "Writing What You Read: Assessment as a Learning Event." Los Angeles: University of California, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) (Feb. 1993).

Appendix A

9 Panorama Way
Beverly, WV 26253
January 8, 1997

Mr. Larry G. Prichard
Superintendent of Randolph County Schools
40 Eleventh Street
Elkins, WV 26241

Dear Mr. Prichard:

I am in the process of completing requirements for a masters degree in elementary education. My thesis work involves the use of portfolio assessment in the elementary classroom.

Therefore, I am requesting your permission to conduct written surveys. These surveys will be sent to the parents of my students at Midland School and to the Randolph County elementary teachers.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Linda Shaw

I grant permission to Linda Shaw to survey the parents of her students at Midland School and the elementary teachers of Randolph County.

Larry G. Prichard
Signature

1-13-97
Date

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix B

Survey of Teacher Response to Student Evaluation Methods

1. What grade level are you currently teaching? _____

2. Which method of evaluation do you use?
   Traditional letter grades
   Checklist of skills
   Portfolios
   Combination of _____

3. Are you using portfolios in the process of evaluating student academic performance?
   Yes No

4. If yes, do you include the portfolios during parent-teacher conferences?
   Yes No

5. If you use portfolios, what do you include?

6. If you use portfolios, do you feel that their use has influenced your teaching? If yes, in what way?

7. Do you feel that portfolios affect student learning? If so, in what way?

8. What do you feel is an important benefit of portfolio evaluation?

9. What disadvantages do you see in the portfolio evaluation process?

10. Which type of assessment do you prefer?
    Report cards with letter grades
    Checklist of skills
    Portfolios

11. If you have comments to add concerning student evaluation, please feel free to do so on the back of this survey.

Thank you for your time!

Grading Period 1 2 3 4

MATHEMATICS					
Counts by 2's, 5's, and 10's					
Understands and applies place values					
Uses ordinal numbers					
Uses objects to demonstrate an understanding of : addition / subtraction					
Understands and applies terms and symbols					
Knows math facts addition					
subtraction					
Regroups using 2 digit addition					
Regroups using 2 digit subtraction					
Demonstrates ability to solve word problems and explain the process.					
Identifies, extends, and creates patterns.					
Constructs and interprets graphs.					
Identifies and classifies geometric shapes.					
Demonstrates an understanding of fractions					
Money Counts and can make change					
Estimates and measures using nonstandard units.					
Estimates and measures using standard units.					
Time: Hour, ½ hour					
5 minutes					
Demonstrates the ability to read and use a calendar.					
Finds missing numbers in equations.					
SOCIAL STUDIES / HEALTH / SCIENCE					
Explores concepts and shows knowledge by observing, questioning, and experimenting.					
Retains information from participation, discussion, activities / projects.					
Gathers, records, and interprets data.					
Computers					
Art					
Physical Education					
Music					

SCHOOL YEAR:_____ STUDENT'S NAME:_____

Grading Period 1 2 3 4

LANGUAGE ARTS				
SPEAKING / LISTENING				
Listens well				
Participates in shared reading				
Uses language to communicate complete thoughts, feelings, needs, and ideas to others.				
Shares an informal presentation before the whole group.				
Reads for pleasure and practical purposes.				
Reads for an appropriate time span.				
Identifies sounds / letters in words: consonants / blend / vowels.				
Able to retell stories.				
Able to answer questions orally.				
Able to answer questions in written form.				
Uses a variety of word recognition strategies.				
READING				
Reads basic vocabulary words.				
Reads fluently with expression.				
Reads with understanding / self-corrects while reading.				
WRITING \ SPELLING				
Writes for pleasure and practical purposes.				
Revises writing for clarity and interest.				
Proofreads writing for spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar.				
Writes legibly Manuscript				
Cursive				
Spells words successfully on tests.				
Applies spelling rules and patterns in independent work.				

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NAME _____ GRADE ____

DEFINITION OF MARKING FOR SUBJECTS LISTED BELOW

A - 94 - 100
B - 85 - 93
C - 75 - 84
D - 70 - 74
F - Below 69
✓ - Help Needed

Music, Art, Physical Education
E - Excellent
S - Satisfactory
U - Unsatisfactory

	Quarter				
	1	2	3	4	Final Grade
READING					
1. Word attack skills					
2. Comprehension					
SPELLING					
1. Correct spelling in other work					
ENGLISH					
HANDWRITING					
1. Correct letter forms					
2. Neat writing					
SCIENCE					
HEALTH					
MATHEMATICS					
1. Computation					
2. Problem solving					
SOCIAL STUDIES					
MUSIC					
ART					
PHYSICAL EDUCATION					
BAND					

Student is working _____ on grade level or _____ below grade level in _____ (list subjects if below level)

SELF DEVELOPMENT

Needs improvement if checked (✓)

	1	2	3	4	Final Grade
1. Works independently					
2. Completes work on time					
3. Uses time wisely					
4. Respects property					
5. Cooperates with others					
6. Listens attentively					
7. Accepts responsibility					
8. Follows directions					
9. Works quietly					
10. Uses good study habits					
11. Respects Rules					

INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL

	1	2	3	4
READING LEVEL				
SPELLING LEVEL				
MATH LEVEL				

ATTENDANCE

	1	2	3	4
DAYS ABSENT				

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

Home-school cooperation is important. We encourage parents to show interest in the child's school work and home assignments. Parent visits to the classroom are welcome. If your child's marks show he needs help, please contact the school for a conference.

Appendix D

BEST COPY AVAILABLE